Herbert Eugene Bolton
"Rim of Christendom - A Biography of Eusebio Francisco Kino: Pacific Coast Pioneer"

Chapter CLII: "What He Had Wrought

What Kino Had Wrought

Herbert E. Bolton

 If this story is too long, Kino himself is to blame, so many and so continued were his activities. Some men rise like a rocket, illuminate the scene for a moment, then disappear from view. Kino was not one of these. His light, beginning modestly as a candle flame, burned ever more brightly, lasted through decades, reached its maximum in his mature life, and was in full glow when suddenly he died. Kino was [587] a marked man during forty years, from his student days at Ingolstadt to his last Mass at Magdalena. In Germany he won recognition for his mathematics. His early letters to Rome revealed to the Father General a man of unusual religious fervor. In Spain his vigorous personality arrested the attention of a princely patroness of missions. On his first arrival in Mexico his knowledge of astronomy was requisitioned and challenged. Each of these stages of his growth is clearly marked.

 Before he came to California Kino's career was in preparation. There he became a personality. Without Kino to shed light upon them, Atondo, Goñi, and Copart would now be dim figures. They were good and useful men. But it was Kino's presence that lifted them and their deeds above the commonplace. On the Peninsula Father Eusebio revealed his gifts as an inimitable missionary, an exuberant explorer, a superb diarist, and a trained cartographer. On his return to the Mexican capital, where he dealt face to face with provincial and viceroy, he demonstrated his power to influence men a power based on a magnetic personality, sound knowledge, and the courage of his convictions.

 But not till he reached Pima Land did Kino's outstanding qualities blossom forth into full flower. There his peculiar genius found its opportunity. He was an individualist, restive of restraint, fitted best to flourish outside the range of stereotyped society. He was most himself on the frontier. The Jesuit precept of obedience he always acknowledged, but with him obedience was never divorced from responsibility. In Pima Land he was beyond the realm of fixed routine, in surroundings where initiative was at a premium. Here his boundless zeal, his vaulting imagination, and his astounding energy found room, though often hampered by misinformed superiors, by the honest fears or the petty jealousies of smaller calibered associates, and by the secret or open hostility of secular neighbors whose desire to exploit the Indians made him their natural enemy.

 Kino's achievements on the Rim of Christendom were manifold. He was great as missionary, church builder, explorer, ranchman, Indian diplomat, cartographer, and historian. He personally baptized more than four thousand Indians, a number which writers persistently exaggerate to forty thousand, merely because an early chronicler mistook [588 ] a cauldron for a cipher. (1) By Kino directly or under his supervision, missions were founded on both sides of the Sonora-Arizona boundary, on the San Ignacio, Altar, Sonóita, and Santa Cruz rivers. The occupation of California by the Jesuits was the direct result of Kino's former residence there and of his persistent efforts in its behalf, for it was from Kino that Salvatierra, founder of the permanent California missions, got his inspiration. Father Juan took up the work where Father Eusebio left off.

 To Kino is due the credit for first traversing in detail and accurately mapping important sections of California and the whole of Pimería Alta. Considered quantitatively alone, his work of exploration was astounding. During his twenty-four years of residence at the mission of Dolores he made more than fifty journeys inland, an average of more than two per year. These tours varied from a hundred to nearly a thousand miles in length. They were all made on horseback. In the course of them he crossed and recrossed repeatedly and at varying angles all of the two hundred miles of country between the San Ignacio and the Gila and the two hundred and fifty miles between the San Pedro and the Colorado. When he first opened them most of his trails were either absolutely untrod by civilized man or had been altogether forgotten. His explorations were made through countries inhabited by unknown tribes who might but fortunately did not offer him personal violence, though they sometimes proved too threatening for the nerve of his companions. One of his routes was over a forbidding, waterless waste which later became the graveyard of scores of travelers who died of thirst because they lacked Father Kino's pioneering skill. I refer to the Camino del Diablo, or Devil's Highway, from Sonóita to the Gila. In the prosecution of these journeys Kino's energy and hardihood were almost beyond belief.

 In estimating these feats of exploration we must remember the limited means with which he performed them. He was not supported and encouraged by hundreds of horsemen and a great retinue of [589] friendly Indians as were De Soto and Coronado. In all but two cases he went almost unaccompanied by military aid, and more than once he traveled without a single white man. In one expedition, made in 1697 to the Gila, he was accompanied by Lieutenant Manje, Captain Bernal, and twenty-two soldiers. In 1701 he was escorted by Manje and ten soldiers. At other times he had no other military escort than Lieutenant Manje or Captain Carrasco, without soldiers. Once Father Gilg and Manje accompanied him; once two Black Robes and two citizens. His last great exploration to the Colorado was made with only one other white man in his party, while three times he reached the Gila with no living soul save his Indian servants. But he was usually well equipped with horses and mules from his own ranches, for he took at different times as many as fifty, sixty, eighty, ninety, one hundred and five, and even one hundred and thirty head. A Kino cavalcade was a familiar sight in Pima Land.

 The work which Father Kino did as ranchman would alone stamp him as an unusual business man and make him worthy of remembrance. He was easily the cattle king of his day and region. From the small outfit supplied him from the older missions to the east and south, within fifteen years he established the beginnings of ranching in the valleys of the San Ignacio, the Altar, the Santa Cruz, the San Pedro, and the Sonóita. The stock raising industry of nearly twenty places on the modern map owes its beginnings on a considerable scale to this indefatigable man. Ranches were established by him or directly under his supervision at Dolores, Caborca, Tubutama, San Ignacio, Imuris, Magdalena, Quiburi, Tumacácori, Cocóspera, San Xavier del Bac, Bacoancos, Guebavi, Siboda, Busanic, Sonóita, San Lazaro, Saric, Santa Barbara, and Santa Eulalia.

 It must not be supposed that Kino did this work for private gain, for he did not own a single animal. It was to furnish a food supply for the neophytes of the missions established, give them economic independence, and train the Indians in the rudiments of civilized life. And it must not be forgotten that Kino conducted this cattle industry with Indian labor, almost without the aid of a single white man. An illustration of his method and of his difficulties is found in the fact that the important ranch at Tumacácori was founded with cattle and [590] sheep driven, at Kino's orders, a hundred miles or more across the country from Caborca, by the very Indians who had recently murdered Father Saeta. There was always the danger that the mission Indians would revolt and run off the stock, as they did in 1695; and the danger, more imminent, that the hostile Apaches would do this damage, and add to it the destruction of life, as experience often proved.

 Kino's endurance in the saddle would make a seasoned cowboy green with envy. This is evident from the bare facts with respect to the long journeys which he made. Here figures become eloquent. When he went to the City of Mexico in the fall of 1695, being then at the age of fifty-one, Kino made the journey in fifty-three days. The distance, via Guadalajara, is no less than fifteen hundred miles, making his average, not counting the stops which he made at Guadalajara and other important places, nearly thirty miles per day. In November, 1697, when he went to the Gila, he rode seven or eight hundred miles in thirty days, not counting out the stops. On his journey next year to the Gila he made an average of twenty-five or more miles a day for twenty-six days, over an unknown country. In 1699 he made the trip to and from the lower Gila, about eight or nine hundred miles, in thirty-five days, an average of ten leagues a day, or twenty-five to thirty miles. In October and November of the same year, he rode two hundred and forty leagues in thirty-nine days. In September and October, 1700, he rode three hundred and eighty-four leagues, or perhaps a thousand miles, in twenty-six days. This was an average of nearly forty miles a day. Next year he made over four hundred leagues, or some eleven hundred miles, in thirty-five days.

 Thus it was customary for Kino when on these missionary tours to make an average of thirty or more miles a day for weeks in a stretch, and out of this time are to be counted the long stops which he made to preach, baptize the Indians, say Mass, and give instructions for building and planting.

 A special instance of his hard riding is found in the journey which he made in November, 1699, with Leal, Gonzalvo, and Manje. After twelve days of continuous travel, supervising, baptizing, and preaching up and down the Santa Cruz Valley, going the while at the average rate of twenty-three miles (nine leagues) a day, Kino left Father Leal [591] at Batki to go home by a more direct route, while he and Manje sped a "la ligera" to the west and northwest, to see if there were any sick Indians to baptize. Going thirteen leagues (thirty-three miles) on the eighth, he baptized two infants and two adults at the village of San Rafael. On the ninth he rode nine leagues to another village, made a census of four hundred Indians, preached to them, and continued sixteen more leagues to another village, making nearly sixty miles for the day. On the tenth he made a census of the assembled, throng of three hundred persons, preached, baptized three sick persons, distributed presents, and then rode thirty-three leagues (some seventy-five miles) over a pass in the mountains to Sonóita, arriving there in the night, having stopped to make a census of, preach to, and baptize in, two villages on the way. Next day he baptized and preached, and then rode, that day and night, the fifty leagues (a hundred and twenty-five miles) that lie between Sonóita and Busanic, where he overtook Father Leal. During. the last three days he had ridden no less than one hundred and eight leagues, or over two hundred and fifty miles, counting, preaching to, and baptizing in five villages on the way. And yet after four hours' sleep he was up next morning, preaching, baptizing, and supervising the butchering of cattle for supplies. Truly this was strenuous work for a man of fifty-five.

 Kino's physical courage is attested by his whole career in America, spent in exploring unknown wilds and laboring among untamed heathen. One illustration, chosen out of many, will suffice. In March and April, 1695, it will be remembered, the Pimas of the Altar Valley rose in revolt. At Caborca Father Saeta was killed and became the protomartyr of Pimería Alta. At Caborca and Tubutama seven servants of the mission were slain, and at Caborca, Tubutama, Imuris, San Ignacio and Magdalena the whole length of the Altar and San Ignacio valleys mission churches and other buildings were burned and the stock killed or stampeded. The missionary of Tubutama fled over the mountains to Cucurpe. San Ignacio being attacked by three hundred warriors, Father Campos fled to the same refuge.

 At Dolores Father Kino, Lieutenant Manje, and three citizens of Bacanuche awaited the onslaught. An Indian who had been stationed on the mountains, seeing the smoke at San Ignacio, fled to Dolores [592] with the news that Father Campos and all the soldiers had been killed. Manje sped to Opodepe to get aid; the three citizens hurried home to Bacanuche, and Kino was left alone. When Manje returned next day, together they hid the treasures of the church in a cave, but in spite of the soldier's entreaties that they should flee, Kino insisted on returning to the mission to await death, which they did. It is indicative of the modesty of this great soul that in his autobiography this incident in his life is passed over in complete silence. But Manje, who was weak or wise enough to wish to flee, was also generous and brave enough to record the padre's heroism and his own fears.

 Kino was a significant cartographer. His maps of Lower California illumined many dark spots in a "tierra incógnita". His "Teatro de Los Trabajos", or map of the Jesuit missions of New Spain, was so important that it was plagiarized and copied for generations. His "Paso por Tierra" was the first map of northern Pimería based on actual exploration, and for nearly a century and a half was the principal one of the region in existence. More especially, it turned the tide from the insular to the peninsular theory of California geography. Kino did not kill the notion outright, but he dealt it a body blow.

 As historian Kino's contribution was even greater. Scholars have long known a few precious items from his pen. More recently a large body of his correspondence and his history of the Pima uprising in 1695 have come to light. Most important of all is the "Favores Celestiales", a complete history, written by Kino himself at his mission of Dolores, covering a large part of his career in America. It was used by the early Jesuit historians, but lay forgotten for over a century and a half. Since its rediscovery it is found to be the source of practically all that hitherto had been known of the work of Kino and his companions, and to contain much that never was known before. Kino, therefore, was not only the first great missionary, ranchman, explorer, and geographer of the Pimería Alta, but his book was the first and will be for all time the principal history of Pima Land during his quarter century.

 Kino was in the fullest sense a pioneer of civilization. But to him all this was incidental. His one burning ambition was to save souls and push outward the Rim of Christendom.

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(1) In 1708 Kino wrote: "In these twenty-one years ... I have baptized here in these new conquests and new conversions about four thousand five hundred souls, and I could have baptized twelve or fifteen thousand if We had not suspended further baptisms until our Lord should bring us necessary fathers to aid us in instructing and ministering to so many new subjects of your Majesty and parishioners of our Holy Mother Church." ("Favores Celestiales", Dedication.)